सभापति महोदय, आज मैं आपको बताता हूं कि हमने 19 गांवों में यह काम किया। आश्चर्य की बात यह है कि पानी के लिए 6-7 किलोमीटर दूर महिलाओं को जाना पड़ता था, आज हालत यह है कि पीने के पानी का जल स्तर ऊपर आया है और जो कुएं पिछले 8-10 सालों से सूखे पड़े थे, पिछले दिनों 28 मई को डॉयरेक्टर जनरल, इंडियन काउंसिल ऑफ ऐग्रीकल्चरल रिसर्च ने देखा कि उन कुओं में 4 मीटर पानी आ गया है और इतना ही नहीं, पीने के पानी के साथ-साथ 12,000 एकड़ जमीन में सिंचाई का इंतजाम भी हो गया है। यह काम केवल लोगों के सीधे इन्वॉल्वमेंट के कारण हुआ है। इसलिए मेरा निवेदन है कि मंत्री महोदय इन योजनाओं में लोगों के इन्वॉल्वमेंट के लिए कोई रास्ता बनाएं तो यह समस्या निश्चित रूप से हल हो सकती है। केवल पैसे के बल पर इसका समाधान नहीं होगा।

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU: Sir, the hon. Member is an experienced person at the field level. He has made two suggestions. The first one is that there should not be any politics in it and nobody should accuse the other. I totally agree with him. This is not a political issue. Both the States and the Centre have to work together to take up this challenge of increasing the ground water level as well as the surface water.

The second point is, unless you involve the people these schemes will not become successful. I totally agree with him. That is why the Government of India has asked the States to involve the Panchayati Raj institutions which are headed by the local people. Even in the Panchayati Raj institutions, as the earlier hon. Member has mentioned, we wanted the women's groups to be actively associated with the water users' association as well as with watershed management. Now, even the NGOs are also coming forward. They are also being encouraged after they are identified by the districts administration.

Thirdly, Sir, the hon. Member is a very experienced person. He explained as to what is happening in Chitrakoot where he has taken up this programme and I have told him that I will be visiting there to see for myself the experience and convey the same to the rest of the country.

Pension for old-age citizens

*422. MISS MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) which are the State Governments that are giving pension to the old age citizens;

(b) what is the annual amount of money each State gives to the old age citizens;

(c) what is the total amount of money Government of India gives to the State Governments on account of old age pension scheme; and

(d) the State-wise details of the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU): (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

Old Age Pensions are being provided in all State and Union Territories under the National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS), administered by the Ministry of Rural Development whereby an amount of Rs. 75/- per month is made available to old and destitute persons aged 65 years and above. In addition, several State Governments and Union Territory Administrations provide old age pensions from their respective Budgets.

The amount distributed in the States/UTs under the National Old Age Pension Scheme and from the State/UTs Budgets are indicated at Statement-I and the funds released by the Government of India for the National Old Age Pension Scheme, State-wise, for the last three years at Statement-II.

Statement-I

Amount of pension under the National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS) and State Old Age Pension Scheme

(Amount in Rs. per month)

Sl. No.	States/UTs	Old age Pension to Beneficiaries covered under Central Pension Scheme			
		Amount Paid as Central Assistance	State Contri-bution	Total	Pension Paid by State to Others
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Andhra Pradesh	75.00	—	75.00	75.00
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	75.00	75.00	150.00	150.00
3.	Assam	75.00	—	75.00	Nil
4.	Bihar	75.00	25.00	100.00	100.00
5.	Chhattisgarh	75.00	75.00	150.00	150.00

1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	Goa	75.00	25.00	100.00	100.00
7.	Gujarat	75.00	200.00	275.00	200.00
8.	Haryana	75.00	125.00	200.00	200.00
9.	Himachal Pradesh	75.00	75.00	150.00	150.00
10.	J&K	75.00	Nil	75.00	150.00
11.	Jharkhand	75.00	25.00	100.00	100.00
12.	Karnataka	75.00	25.00	100.00	100.00
13.	Kerala	75.00	35.00	110.00	Nil
14.	Madhya Pradesh	75.00	75.00	150.00	150.00
15.	Maharashtra	75.00	175.00	250.00	250.00
16.	Manipur	75.00	—	75.00	100.00
17.	Meghalaya	75.00	25.00	100.00	Nil
18.	Mizoram	75.00	25.00	100.00	100.00
19.	Nagaland	75.00	25.00	100.00	100.00
20.	Orissa	75.00	25.00	100.00	100.00
21.	Punjab	75.00	125.00	200.00	200.00
22.	Rajasthan	75.00	125.00	200.00	200.00
23.	Sikkim	75.00	125.00	200.00	Nil
24.	Tamil Nadu	75.00	125.00	200.00	200.00
25.	Tripura	75.00	50.00	125.00	Nil
26.	Uttar Pradesh	75.00	50.00	125.00	125.00
27.	Uttaranchal	75.00	50.00	125.00	125.00
28.	West Bengal	75.00	25.00	100.00	100.00
	UnionTerritories				
29.	A&N Islands	75.00	Nil	75.00	100.00
30.	Chandigarh	75.00	125.00	200.00	Nil
31.	D&N Haveli	75.00	Nil	75.00	60.00
32.	Daman & Diu	75.00	Nil	75.00	60.00
33.	NCT Delhi	75.00	125.00	200.00	200.00
34.	Lakshadweep	75.00	_	75.00	100.00
35.	Pondicherry	75.00	50.00	125.00	125.00

Statement-II

Funds released by Government of India for National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS)

(Rs. in Lakhs)

Sl.No.	States/UTs	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-2001
1	2	3	4	5
1.	Andhra Pradesh	4439.38	4361.76	4360.76
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	1.94	7.07	66.60
3.	Assam	724.49	745.87	2344.31
4.	Bihar	6685.08	5761.09	4268.85
5.	Chhattisgarh*	—	—	1005.13
6.	Goa	23.17	27.94	27.94
7.	Gujarat	357.14	320.92	370.53
8.	Haryana	295.46	498.94	450.14
9.	Himachal Pradesh	125.53	233.29	200.12
10.	J&K	201.91	299.55	228.02
11.	Jharkhand*	—	—	1250.95
12.	Karnataka	3649.63	2959.63	2899.69
13.	Kerala	1377.55	1274.72	947.96
14.	Madhya Pradesh	4660.82	4610.76	3056.14
15.	Maharashtra	3252.35	3047.39	3161.48
16.	Manipur	18.82	87.71	251.00
17.	Meghalaya	81.33	94.79	297.33
18.	Mizoram	47.55	29.20	91.62
19.	Nagaland	9.41	41.02	221.75
20.	Orissa	2289.62	3573.63	2962.35
21.	Punjab	159.72	317.91	429.15
22.	Rajasthan	941.57	1420.79	1390.60
23.	Sikkim	38.21	14.90	94.57
24.	Tamil Nadu	2384.62	3158.57	3086.94
25.	Tripura	137.68	178.18	497.93
26.	Uttar Pradesh	7155.07	7315.09	6629.80
27.	Uttaranchal*	—	—	385.00
28.	West Bengal	2909.68	4216.81	2965.01

*New State

1	2	3	4	5
Union Territories				
29.	A&N Islands	0.00	8.69	0.00
30.	Chandigarh	0.00	13.66	8.83
31.	D&N Haveli	1.41	0.00	10.62
32.	Daman & Diu	1.87	2.48	1.95
33.	NCT Delhi	88.92	124.79	0.00
34.	Lakshadweep	0.00	0.93	0.00
35.	Pondicherry	21.06	49.05	24.53
	TOTAL	42080.99	44797.13	43987.60

MISS MABEL REBELLO: Sir, as per the reply given by the hon. Minister, only 60 lakh people are receiving the old age pension all over the country, and the maximum pension given is Rs. 200/- Government of India is giving Rs. 75/- and the State Government gives the rest. So, you can imagine how the old people, in their last days, can live with Rs. 200/- per month. They need food, they need shelter, they need clothing, they need medical care, they need physiotherapy, they need counselling and they need what not. It is said that almost eight crore people are elderly in India. Out of them, almost 75 per cent live in the villages. That means, practically, six crore of elderly people line in the villages. As per the study conducted by the Help Age India, 45 per cent of them are really poor. This comes to 3 crores. Now, can these three crore people, who are old, who are destitute, manage with a paltry sum of Rs. 200 per month, which is the maximum, including the States' contribution? Now, I would like to know whether the hon. Minister is happy with the situation, since only 20 per cent of the people get pension, that too a paltry amount of Rs. 200 per month. Is this enough? Does the hon. Minister have any plan to cover the entire gamut of people who are old and destitute? What are the plans that he has and when does he propose to cover the entire destitute and old people? This is my first supplementary.

ग्रामीण विकास मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री सुभाष महरिया) : माननीय सभापति जी, जैसा माननीय सदस्या ने बताया है कि 60 लाख लोगों को यह पेंशन योजना का लाभ दिया जा रहा है। राष्ट्रीय वृद्धावस्था योजना के तहत सन् 1998-99 में 420.80 करोड़ रुपया 50,80,721 लोगों को दिया गया, सन् 1999-2000 में 447,95 करोड़ रुपया 58,80,868 लोगों को दिया सन् 2000-2001 में 439.87 करोड़ रुपया... **(व्यवधान)**...

MISS MABEL REBELLO: We have the reply with us. My question is: How will he cover the entire—100 per cent—people who are old, destitute and poor? What you are saying given in the Statement is about what you had done in the past.

श्री सुभाष महरिया: इस योजना के तहत उन सभी लोगों को इस योजना में शामिल किया गया है जिनकी उम्र 65 वर्ष से अधिक है और जो लोग किसी भी प्रकार से निराश्रित हैं, जिन लोगों के परिवार में आय का कोई स्त्रोत नहीं है, भरण-पोषण का कोई साधन नहीं है या नियमित रूप से उनके भरण-पोषण का कोई साधन नहीं है उन सभी लोगों के लिए जिनकी आय बहुत कम है, गरीबी रेखा में जो लोग हैं या जिनकी आय कम है ग्राम सभाओं में उनका चयन करके इस योजना में उनको लाभ दिया गया है और उन सभी लोगों को प्रदेश की सरकारों के साथ हम सामंजस्य करके 75 रुपया प्रति माह भारत सरकार की ओर से दिया जाता है, उन सभी लोगों को यह राशि मुहैया हो रही है।

कुमारी मैबल रिबैलो: मेरे सवाल का जवाब नहीं दिया गया। मैंने कहा How the remaining 80 per cent of the old people will be covered? Sir, they cannot live with a paltry amount of Rs. 200 per month. It is not enough for them to make a decent living. That was my question. He did not answer that.

श्री संघ प्रिय गौतम: आपने सुना नहीं शांति से।

कुमारी मैबल रिबैलो: नहीं-नहीं, मैंने सुना है। उन्होंने जो 20 परसेंट के लिए किया है वही कहा है, जो 80 परसेंट लेफ्ट ओवर हैं उनके लिए क्या कर रहे हैं और 200 रुपए में वह लोग खाना नहीं खा सकते, रह नहीं सकते हैं, उनका दवा पानी नहीं हो सकता है। उसके लिए क्या करेंगे? मैंने पहले सप्लीमेंट्री में पूछा उसका जवाब नहीं दिया।

श्री सुभाष महरिया: सभापति महोदय, माननीय सदस्या ने पूछा है कि क्या राज्य सरकारें गरीबी रेखा के नीचे के लोगों की लिस्ट भेजती हैं। राज्य सरकारों से भारत सरकार को 65 वर्ष से अधिक की उम्र के लोगों की लिस्ट भेजी जाती है और जो वहां से लिस्ट आती है उसी के अनुरुप भारत सरकार 75 रुपये की राशि 65 वर्ष से अधिक की उम्र के लोगों को, जिनकी आयु के साधन बिल्कुल कम हैं, देती है।

MISS MABEL REBELLO: My second supplementary is, I am told, the Government of India has commissioned a project called Old Age Social and Income Security (OASIS). The Government of India has also set up an expert committee under this project. The Committee presented its final report to the hon. Prime Minister on 14th January, 2000. If this report is implemented, it would help all those who are above 65 years of age. A small amount of money will be collected while they are able to work. Now, eighteen months have passed since the report was submitted. I would like to know whether the Government has any plan to implement the recommednations of that

Committee. What is the planning, Sir? When would the recommendations of that Committee would be implemented? If this report is implemented, it would help all the people who are above 65 years of age, especially the old destitutes. My first supplementary was not answered at all.

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU: Mr. Chairman, Sir, with regard to her first supplementary, I do admit that the situation is not satisfactory, because just Rs. 75/- from the Centre and Rs. 100/- or Rs. 125/- from the State Governments will not suffice. This programme has been going on since 1995. Secondly, it all depends on how much allocation is made for this particular sector. Then only, this amount can be increased. This question was discussed earlier also in this august House. And, at that time, many hon. Members said, "this amount is not sufficient." As I have just now submitted, we have a huge population, and quite a good number of them are above 65 years of age and destitutes. The allocation that is made for this particular programme is not sufficient to meet the total requirement of all the States concerned. Even if you combine the State and Central pension together, the amount is not sufficient. I do agree with the Member, but the question is of financial constraints. This has to be understood. It is a joint responsibility of both the Centre and the State Governments to take care of these helpless people. The Government is very much concerned about this issue. We shall see, in the future, as to what extent we can increase this amount and then strengthen this programme further. Sir, with regard to the second supplementary put by the hon. Members, I would say that this matter pertains to the Ministry of Social Justice and Employment. I shall convey her suggestions and also her feelings to them. It is not a suggestion; a memorandum was earlier submitted in this regard. The hon. Member has put the question as to what action has been taken on the particular suggestion given by that Committee. I shall talk to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and convey her as to what action has been taken in this regard.

श्री रामदास अग्रवाल: सभापति महोदय, माननीय मंत्री जी ने वृद्धावस्था पेंशन के बारे में जो आंकड़े प्रस्तुत किए हैं, मैं उन आंकड़ों में से कुछ आंकड़े आपके समाने रखना चाहूंगा। जैसे गुजरात में केन्द्रीय सरकार 75 रुपये वृद्धावस्था पेंशन के लिए देती है और गुजरात सरकार 200 रुपये देती है जो कि शायद हाईऐस्ट रिकार्ड है। मैं मंत्री जी का ध्यान इस बात की ओर आकर्षित करना चाहता हूं क्योंकि कुछ स्टेट ऐसी हैं जो कि 25 रुपये वृद्धावस्था पेंशन देती हैं, छोटी स्टेट दें वह तो समझ में आता है, लेकिन वेस्ट बंगाल जैसी बड़ी स्टेट की सरकार भी 25 रुपये मात्र दे रही है और केन्द्र सरकार लोगों को 75 रुपये दे रही है। वेस्ट बंगाल जैसी बड़ी स्टेट के लोगों को कुल मिलाकर वृद्धावस्था पेंशन में 100 रुपये मिलते हैं इसी तरह से और भी स्टेट्स हैं मैं मंत्री जी

से निवेदन करना चाहता हूं कि क्या आप राज्य सरकारों को इस बात के लिए प्रेरित करने का प्रयास करेंगे कि जितना रुपया केन्द्र सरकार वृद्धावस्था पेंशन में देती है उतना रुपया तो कम से कम राज्य सरकारें भी दें? जो अच्छी सरकारें कहलाती हैं, बीस-बीस साल तक जहां एक पार्टी का राज़ चला है, क्या वे 25 रुपये वृद्धावस्था पेंशन में देकर अपने यहां के प्रवासियों को, निवासियों को संतुष्ट कर रही है? या फिर केन्द्र सरकार उनको भी इस बात के लिए बाध्य करे कि कम से कम 75 रुपया तो जरूर दे। ...(व्यवधान)...आप नाराज मत होइए। आपके प्रांत की ही बात है और शर्म की बात है अगर आप इस पर गौरव महसूस करते हैं तो मैं कुछ नहीं कह सकता। लेकिन पश्चिमी बंगाल की सरकार के लिए यह अत्यन्त शर्मनाक बात है। वह गरीबों की बात करती है, पीड़ितों की बात करती है लेकिन अपनी तरफ से 25 रुपए देती है। मैं मंत्री महोदय से पूछना चाहता हूं कि क्या वे राज्य सरकारों को इस बात के लिए बाध्य कर सकेंगे या प्रेरित कर सकेंगे कि जितना पैसा केन्द्र सरकार देती है कम से कम वे भी उतना ही पैसा निश्चित रूप से दें? इस बात के लिए क्या वह व्यवस्था करेंगे? मेरे प्रश्न का यह पहला भाग है। इसी से संबंधित दूसरा भाग यह है कि जो पैसा दिया जाता है जैसा अभी मंत्री जी ने कहा है कि 440 करोड़ रुपया पूरे देश भर में दिया जाता है। यह केन्द्र सरकार का हिस्सा है, राज्य सरकार जो भी हिस्सा देती होंगी वह जोड़ती हैं। मैं मंत्री जी से केवल यह जानना चाहता हूं कि क्या इस प्रकार का कोई मैकेनिज्म तय किया है जिससे यह पता लगे कि राज्य और केन्द्र सरकार के द्वारा वितरित धन जिन आदमियों को चाहिए या जितना पैसा केन्द्र सरकार से भेजा गया या राज्य सरकार ने अपना हिस्सा दिया या नहीं दिया, उतना पैसा बांटा या नहीं बांटा, बांटा है तो क्या सही आदमी को बांटा है? इसके बारे में केन्द्र सरकार का या प्रान्त की सरकार का या संयुक्त रूप से दोनों का कोई मैकेनिज्म है?

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU: Sir, with regard to the first part of the question, I would like to say that I do not want to drag myself into any controversy. After all, you know that different States...(*Interruptions*)...Please let us not take the name of a particular State. There are a number of States which are not giving adequate amounts and the Centre itself...(*Interruptions*)...It is not a question of my party Member or your party Member. This matter is related to the whole House. My only appeal to the House is...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI KAPIL SIBAL: My appeal to the Minister in charge is this. It is not the kind of question which ought to have been raised, because the hon. Member has injected politics into it. This is an issue which concerns the old people of our country. It is unfortunate on the part of the hon. Member to raise a particular question by injecting politics to an issue ...(*Interruptions*) ... This issue must be looked at from a national point of view because it is

related to the old-age people of our country. This is unfortunate ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI T.N. CHATURVEDI: Sir, he is narrating the plight of the poor people of Bengal...(*Interruptions*)...

श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी: घोटाले कर रहे है...(**व्यवधान**)...

श्री रामदास अग्रवाल: मुझे माननीय सदस्य की सलाह की आवश्यकता नहीं है? ...(**व्यवधान**)...अगर वेस्ट बंगाल की सरकार गरीबों को पैसा देती है तो ...(**व्यवधान**)...

श्री जीवन राय: वेस्ट बंगाल ने...(**व्यवधान**)...किया है। ...(**व्यवधान**)... अभी आपकी पालिटिक्स...(**व्यवधान**)...

श्री रामदास अग्रवाल: माननीय मंत्री जी से प्रार्थना है...(**व्यवधान**)...

श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी: वहां गरीबों की हमदर्द सरकार है और आप अंगुली उठा रहे हैं...(**व्यवधान**)...

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU: Please, Madam.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let the Minister reply ...(*Interruptions*)...

श्री रामदास अग्रवाल: मुझे माननीय सदस्य की सलाह की आवश्यकता नहीं है ...(**व्यवधान**)...

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU: Sir, please ...(*Interruptions*)...Madam, I will also talk about it. As I have said in the beginning, as a Minister, I do not want to be drawn into any controversy on this sensitive issue. Certainly, the Members have a right to make suggestions or put questions. But, I want to submit that there are different States which are giving different amounts, matching the Central Old-Age Pension. I think, the list is also here. Anybody can see it. They can draw their own conclusions. But my point is very simple. Now, with regard to the second supplementary, the first suggestion he has given is about impressing upon the States. I would like to say that if the Sates financial position permits, we will be happy to do that. I will convey the mood of the House that the amount is not sufficient. I myself am agreeing to it. We will be impressing upon the States to give an equal matching amount to this amount of Rs. 75, which is provided by the Central Government, so that the poor people can get adequate relief. This applies to all the States concerned. The second thing is with regard to the delivery of the

Old-Age Pension. The anxiety of the Member is that we should see to it that the money which is allocated, either by the Centre or by the States, reaches the targeted people. The system is that we send it through money orders. We have not received any significant number of complaints in this regard.

Secondly, we have brought it to the notice of the States that this scheme of Old-Age Pension should be brought to the notice of the village Gram Sabhas so that the entire village will come to know about it; it will ensure that there is a proper utilisation of it and there is no misuse.

If the hon. Member has got any specific complaint about somebody not receiving the pension in a particular State, let him give me the details. I will check up the matter with the particular State Government.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: At the very outset, let me congratulate Miss Rebello for raising this question about the aged people. Over the last few years in this House, I have hardly seen any one asking this type of a question. It is a matter of disgrace to all of us. We discuss so many things, but not the matter concerning the old generation which has served this country so well during their prime.

I think, the hon. Minister is very right in saying that we must have a sense of proportion and should not bring politics into a matter like this.

I would like to say, considering the nation's health, we should have a policy regarding the old people also. For the last few days, we have been discussing Bill in the other House about the enhancement of salaries to Members of Parliament. That Bill will come for discussion in the next few days in our House also. Our salary is much more than what is being given to the old people. So something has to be done in that regard. I would like to know what is the policy of the Central Government as far as the old people are concerned.

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU: Sir, we have a National Old-age Pension Scheme. We have also a National Maternity Benefit Scheme. Similarly, we have National Family Welfare Schemes. All these are welfare measures initiated by successive Governments, whether they belonged to this side or that side. These measures have been taken, as a supplement to the efforts of the State Government. Keeping in view the overall financial status of the Central Government and the States, and the concern of the hon. Members, as and when it is possible, we will consider increasing the amount further.

SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI: Sir, I also join my hon. colleague in saying that it should not be made a political issue as to which State is giving what and so on. It is not as important as how much is going out to the old people of this country, who have served this nation during their prime.

Sir, the hon. Minister has given us figures about what the Central Government gives and what the State Government give. I would like to know whether you have a monitoring mechanism to see that the amount is being properly utilised. Our experience in the field is that old people do not get their Old-Age Pension, because the formalities involved are so great that they are not able to fulfil those formalities. This meagre amount of Rs. 200/- gets spent on getting the people complete formalities.

Secondly, I would like to know whether the Central Government has any control to ensure that the amount sent by the Central Government for the purpose is not diverted to any other scheme or activity by the State Government.

Thirdly, how many complaints have you received that the money is not reaching the targeted people?

Fourthly, as MPs, we have got the MPLADS funds. I would like to know what are you doing to encourage Members of Parliament to contribute to old-age schemes or old-age homes from out of the MPLADS funds. From my personal experience, I find, whatever we have tried to do, has always been blocked, and that there is no way for making any allocations to old-age homes or old-age schemes. Don't you think Rs. 200/- is not enough in today's level of increased prices? When we are hiking our own salaries don't you think it would be in the fitness of things to hike the pension of those who do not have a voice, especially, in an august House like ours?

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU: Mr. Chairman, Sir with regard to the monitoring system, as we have a federal system, we have to depend on the States. I don't suspect any State, unless somebody makes a specific allegation or a complaint with regard to what happened in a particular State.

Secondly, the District Collector, who is the head of the district, as far as the executive is concerned, takes care and reviews it periodically. As I have already said, it is the Gram Sabha which can totally guarantee proper utilisation of this. We have requested the States to impress upon the local bodies to call the Gram Sabha four times in a year and see to it that these issues of Central schemes, identification of beneficiaries as well as proper

implementation of the pension scheme, etc., are also attended to by it. In addition to this, we have area monitors; they will be going around the country. They will made a random survey on implementation of various schemes. Their feedback to me has also not indicated that anything has gone wrong in a major way anywhere.

Sir, I must also share with the House that we have an evaluation study conducted by organisations, particularly, with regard to the Old-Age Pension Scheme. Sir, the report of the evaluation study conducted by the Operations Research Group (ORG) in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and West Bengal, reveals that the Old-Age Pension Scheme has reached the targeted segment. This is the crux of the recommendation they have made.

A quick evaluation study in 129 districts across 30 States and Union Territories of the country conducted by the Centre for Management Development, Thiruvananthapuram—that is an organisation, Sir,—says "the National Old-Age Pension Scheme is found to be extremely beneficial to the old destitutes. In general, it has succeeded in giving them a sense of security and life, and has definitely improved their quality of life." This is the recommendation they have made. This being the case, I have no reason to suspect that there is any misuse going on. In a vast country like this, in a particular case, in a particular district in a village, if somebody misuses the money, if a local postman or a local official misuses the money, if a specific complaint comes, there is the Collector to take care of it. The Zilla Parishad also can discuss about it.

Now, I am insisting—I am totally convinced—that the Gram Sabha will be the ultimate remedy for proper utilisation of the money under this scheme...(*Interruptions*)...if at all the Gram Sabhas are held regularly, I do agree with him. Regarding the Old-Age Pension Scheme, you can have a review in the Gram Sabha. In addition to this, you can give any meaningful suggestion for proper implementation of this scheme, without creating a new agency. I am open for suggestions also. ...(*Interruptions*)...Regarding the MPLAD Scheme, it is not in my hands. She has given a meaningful suggestion, but the Old-Age Homes have to be recognised by the Government. According to my knowledge, the MPs are allowed to contribute upto Rs. 10 lakhs for the construction of Old-Age Homes.

SHRI AHMED PATEL: It is not in the guideline. ....(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU: If it is recognised by the Government ...(*Interruptions*)...Sir, I will take up the matter with the Minister of Planning,

who looks after the MPLAD Scheme ...(*Interruptions*)... If I am wrong, I stand corrected. But I will verify it.

श्री गांधी आजाद: धन्यवाद महोदय। महोदय, वृद्धावस्था पेंशन वितरण में जो आय का प्रमाण-पत्र देना पड़ता है, व्यावहारिक रूप से देखा जाता है जो जरूरतमंद लोग हैं, वे आय का प्रमाण-पत्र बनवा नहीं पाते हैं। इसके कारण उनको पेंशन नहीं मिलती और जिनको जरूरत नहीं है वे लोग फर्जी आय का प्रमाण-पत्र बनवाकर इसका लाभ उठाना चाहते हैं और उठाते भी हैं। मैं मंत्री महोदय से जानना चाहता हूं कि 65 वर्ष से ऊपर के वृद्धों की देश में कुल कितनी संख्या है और उनमें से गरीबी की रेखा से नीचे जीवनयापन करने वाले वृद्धों की संख्या क्या है? मैं यह भी जानना चाहता हूं कि क्या गरीबी की रेखा से नीचे जीवनयापन करने वाले सारे वृद्धों को पेंशन दी जाती है या नहीं?

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU: Sir, It is a specific question concerned with the widows, and he is asking about the total number of widows who are eligible below the poverty line. That information is not readily available with me. I shall try to collect it, and, then, convey it to the hon. Member.

With regard to part (a) of his supplementary, as I have already mentioned, if there are specific complaints, they will be enquired into. With regard to getting the certificate of their eligibility, this is looked after by the State Government, and if there are any complaints, they can address them to the District Administration or to the State Administration.

*423. [*The questioners (SHRI AMAR SINGH) was absent. For answer vide Page 27 infra.*]

Atrocities on Dalits in Gujarat

*424. SHRI JIBON ROY: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the news-item captioned, "Upper-caste men force Dalits to leave village," appearing in the Hindustan Times of 30th July, 2001;

(b) whether it is a fact that the Dalits are being forced to leave the village in Junagarh, Gujarat under threats and intimidation by Upper-caste people; and

(c) if so, what action is being taken by Government to check these activities?